

**TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY**

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**Student Assessment Division**

# Test Security Supplement

2010–2011

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## Purpose of this Supplement

Maintaining the security and confidentiality of the Texas state assessment program is crucial for ensuring valid test scores and providing standard and equal testing opportunities for all students. Given the high stakes associated with student performance and the increasing complexity of the assessment program, test administration personnel face new challenges in managing the testing requirements at the local level. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) Student Assessment Division developed the *Test Security Supplement* to help guide districts in implementing these requirements and to foster best practices for maintaining a secure testing program.

First introduced in fall 2005, the *Test Security Supplement* has been revised annually to address the most frequently reported problems and challenges experienced in previous administrations and to alert districts about possible issues they may face in the upcoming testing year. In 2006, TEA released the *Secure Materials Supplement* in response to an increased focus on the loss and late return of secure test materials distributed to school districts and the additional measures implemented to collaboratively ensure the successful return of these items. The topics covered in the *Secure Materials Supplement* were later incorporated into the *Test Security Supplement* in order to provide a single resource to testing personnel.

The information contained in the *Test Security Supplement* is organized from the perspective of issues a district testing coordinator might encounter before, during, and after a test administration and is meant to provide guidance on how required tasks can be performed as directed. **This document is not intended to replace any procedures or instructions contained in the 2011 District and Campus Coordinator Manual or test administrator manuals.** It is provided to testing personnel as a supplement to further support incident-free test administrations.

## General Information and Key Changes in Test Security

The contents of the 2010–2011 *Test Security Supplement* do not differ significantly from the previous year's supplement; however, the document has been reorganized slightly to be more succinct and easy to reference. Last year's *General Information and Key Changes in Test Security* portion of the supplement included a substantial amount of information pertaining to TEA's comprehensive 14-point test security plan. This information still exists as part of the supplement but has been relocated to its own appendix ([Appendix B](#)). This section has also been updated to address several concerns that arose during 2010 testing, as well as other issues that were observed by the Student Assessment Security Task Force (STF) while processing the irregularities from these administrations.

### Secure Storage Areas

State assessment procedures clearly stipulate that all secure test materials must be kept in locked storage when not in use and that only trained, certified personnel and/or their trained designees (who have signed an oath beforehand) are authorized to have access to these items. While most districts and campuses adhere to this policy, in reviewing the irregularities reported for 2010 the STF observed instances where there appears to be a misunderstanding about the intent of the requirement. Specifically, some campuses have correctly identified a lockable area in which to store secure materials but have not given sufficient consideration to limiting access to the selected location.

Ensuring that materials are only accessible to one person or very few individuals becomes a critical issue should a confidentiality or security breach occur. It has become apparent during several investigations

that campus coordinators and administrators have thought there were a specific number of keys that could unlock their secure storage areas, only to discover that there were other previously unidentified copies of the key or that many individuals were aware of where a secure storage key was kept and could easily access it. The STF has also observed that some testing personnel have incorrectly assumed that security could be maintained by simply placing a “Do Not Enter” sign on the door to the secure area.

TEA understands that finding a suitable location to store assessment materials can present certain logistical issues for campuses. However, many of these concerns are outweighed by the potential harm that could result to students and the district should the legitimacy of a test administration be called into question as the result of a breach in test security and/or confidentiality. District coordinators are encouraged to verify that all campuses are, in fact, meeting the intent of these storage requirements.

## Writing on Test Materials

It has become increasingly evident that many district and campus staff have been writing students' names and/or placing labels on students' test booklets in an effort to reduce or eliminate distribution errors. It has also been observed that testing personnel have been writing test booklet numbers on students' answer documents. TEA does not discourage districts from implementing local policies designed to ensure that materials are issued correctly; however, it appears that many campuses have incorporated these practices in a way that conflicts with testing procedures. Procedures for administering state assessments are clearly outlined in the test administration manuals, where scripted instructions specifically direct test administrators to tell examinees that they will write their names on their booklets and their booklet numbers on their answer documents. **Assessment staff, therefore, should not write or place labels on areas of the test booklet or answer document that are reserved for student use.** Staff **may** write or place labels in the upper right portion on the front cover of students' test booklets as long as these actions do not result in test administrators deviating from scripted directions. If space permits, staff **may** also write test booklet numbers in the upper right portion on the front of students' answer documents. No other label besides the precoded label should ever be placed on an answer document.

## Completion and Retention of Testing-Related Documentation

The STF has encountered situations where it is evident that testing personnel are not filling out seating charts and/or Materials Control Forms correctly with all the required information. In some cases, these documents may have been altered or tampered with after a test administration. In other cases, it was discovered during an investigation that the documents were incomplete and could not be recreated. Investigations can be compromised when this occurs.

District testing coordinators should reinforce the importance of these documents and actively oversee and confirm that campus testing personnel are completing and storing this information appropriately. Districts should consider implementing procedures whereby these documents are either stored electronically or are held in a location where they cannot be altered.

## Reporting Incidents that do not Constitute Testing Violations

The STF has continued to receive irregularity report submissions for incidents that are not considered to be testing violations. In these situations, something occurs that could possibly represent a potential problem such as a breach of confidentiality, but it appears not to be an error committed by an adult or does not compromise the validity of the assessment. Some examples include:

- ▶ Broken seals (accidental)
- ▶ Student cheating or misbehavior
- ▶ Student moving into another test section
- ▶ Cell phones/other electronic devices

Coordinators should evaluate the circumstances when notified of these occurrences and determine whether any adult testing personnel bears responsibility for what happened. That is, if a test administrator was not monitoring effectively and an examinee moved into another subject area test, or if a test administrator should have detected and prevented student cheating or cell phone use, an irregularity report is required.

If the district determines that no error was committed by an adult, the district may wish to keep local documentation of what occurred.

## New Online Process for Submitting Alternate Test Date Requests

The STF has been working to create a more streamlined process for the submission and review of district requests for alternate test dates. An online submission form has been developed and is scheduled to be deployed the early part of 2011. Updated guidelines for requesting changes to scheduled assessment dates will be provided, and districts will be notified when the online form becomes accessible and where to locate it.

Additional information, such as common errors TEA has observed in previous years' administrations, has been included throughout this supplement to clarify and heighten awareness of situations that can lead to testing irregularities. The following icon will appear next to sections and/or topics where this information has been added:



*Denotes additional information  
regarding common errors*

## Overview of Materials Security

According to 19 TAC §101.61, all test materials must be handled in strict accordance with the instructions contained in the *2011 District and Campus Coordinator Manual* and in the test administrator manuals. Trained, certified personnel and/or their trained designees are the only individuals authorized to have access to test materials. In addition, all secure items must be properly monitored and accounted for during testing and kept in locked storage when not in use.

District testing coordinators are responsible for ensuring that all secure materials have been accounted for, both upon receipt in the district and prior to returning the materials to the state's testing contractor. Every test booklet and Linguistically Accommodated Testing (LAT) linguistic simplification guide displays a bar code containing a unique security number used for tracking purposes. Districts are required to implement any controls necessary to ensure accurate and reliable tracking of all secure items and must maintain inventory and shipping records for at least five years in the event that a discrepancy arises or the receipt of the district's materials cannot be confirmed.

To assist coordinators in identifying sections and individual topics that pertain directly to maintaining the security of test materials, the following "Lock" icon will appear next to these items throughout this supplement:



For additional information regarding some best practices that have been employed in the field, refer to [Appendix A](#) of this document.

### Differentiating Between Secure and Nonsecure Items

[Appendix C](#) of this supplement provides a summary of the types of secure and nonsecure test materials that are sent to districts and identifies which items must be returned in the scorable shipment and which are returned in the nonscorable shipment. All bar-coded secure materials must be shipped back to the testing contractor at the end of each test administration; however, only a portion of the nonsecure materials must be returned. Districts should note that some nonsecure items may contain student information that must be kept confidential.

## What Can You Do to Make Sure Your Program is Secure?

### Things to Consider BEFORE an Administration



#### **Planning for the Receipt, Storage, and Distribution of Materials**

Sound planning plays a key role in ensuring the proper handling and successful return of all secure materials. Because test materials are stored at campuses for much of the time they are in the district, it is essential that campus coordinators also plan accordingly. District testing coordinators must verify that the campuses have sufficient measures in place and are implementing these procedures for tracking secure materials. Listed below are some steps coordinators should take into account when planning for an administration.

☒ **Prepare for the receipt and storage of test materials.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Carefully review the advance letter and materials list so you will know exactly which and how many materials will arrive from the testing contractor. These documents should be available online approximately one month before each test administration.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Using the materials list, verify that each campus will have sufficient quantities of test materials. Consider compiling the needs of all of the district's campuses and submit a single order to the state's testing contractor.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Confirm that your secure area is large enough to store all materials you will receive from the contractor, including shipments for administrations that overlap.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Verify that you have enough room to sort the materials for each administration.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Have a plan in place for keeping each administration's materials organized and separate. (Do not mix administrations when you return materials. Materials returned in boxes labeled incorrectly take longer to process.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Identify how you will store, distribute, and track additional materials after they are received.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Identify all personnel who will be authorized to have access to materials.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Require that campuses identify all individuals who will have access to the secure storage area. Consider requiring campuses to limit the number of individuals who have a key to this area or who have knowledge of and/or access to where keys are kept.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make certain that campuses are prepared to receive their shipment and have adequate secure storage space and room to inventory and sort materials.

☒ **Prepare for the distribution of test materials.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Establish procedures for distributing and tracking overage materials. Use a tracking document or some other means to record the security numbers and destination of all booklets.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Establish a secure method for transferring materials to campuses.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Make sure that the individuals transporting the materials are authorized to handle secure materials.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Establish sign-off procedures to identify who is responsible for materials when they are not in your possession.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ensure that campus coordinators correctly use Materials Control Forms when distributing test materials to test administrators each day. Require the use of a tracking document to record overage, additional materials received, or booklets transferred between campuses.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Verify that each campus has check-in/check-out procedures established and documented.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make sure that campus coordinators know that they are required to verify and account for all booklets each day.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make arrangements to ensure that secure materials will not be accidentally discarded by custodial personnel.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Have procedures in place at all campuses to ensure the proper packing and return of materials to the district coordinator.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Require that campus coordinators have procedures for verifying that all answer documents are accounted for and correctly submitted for processing after testing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Establish a process for ensuring that overage is accounted for after the administration.



## ***Receiving and Distributing Test Materials***

For most administrations, secure and nonsecure materials are combined into one shipment, which will arrive in the district approximately two to three weeks before testing. For all other administrations, the secure and nonsecure materials will be shipped independently. In the case of separate shipments, districts normally receive the nonsecure materials about three weeks in advance of the secure shipment, and they will be divided by administration into a WHITE district coordinator box, district overage box(es), and campus box(es). The secure materials will typically arrive two to three weeks before testing. Regardless of the shipping method, it is imperative that all secure materials be physically inventoried upon receipt.

Test material overage is assigned to the district. Any additional materials that are required at a campus must be tracked to that campus. This also applies to secure materials that are transferred between campuses within a district or between districts.

The ultimate responsibility of accounting for test materials falls upon the district testing coordinator; however, campus coordinators play an integral role in supporting this task. Using some type of tracking process such as the Materials Control Form can greatly assist in your ability to locate all secure materials in your possession throughout a test administration.

### **☑ Receive, inventory, and store test materials.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Verify the shipment of test materials. For all shipments, check that all boxes are accounted for by verifying the testing program noted on the box and label and the sequence of numbers displayed on the boxes – e.g., Box 35 of 55.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Place all secure materials in locked storage when not in use. Keep materials for different administrations separate.



☒ **Distribute test materials to campuses.**

- \_\_\_ Document the distribution of materials to the campuses.
- \_\_\_ **DO NOT DELAY** in forwarding materials to the campuses. Campus materials will be packaged in separate boxes with brightly colored labels.
- \_\_\_ Make certain that all campuses have physically inventoried their shipments and verified the completeness of all test booklet packets that have been received.
- \_\_\_ Ensure that all campuses provide you with their requests for additional materials, if needed. It will be more efficient to first collect this information from all campuses so a single order for additional materials can be placed with the state's testing contractor.



## **Handling Testing Disruptions**

Disruptions in testing generally involve serious situations that can usually be resolved when properly handled. Having a plan in place to address unforeseen events can contribute to a successful resolution and can help to ensure that there is minimal impact on students. District testing coordinators should contact the Student Assessment Division as soon as possible to discuss the situation when something unforeseen occurs. To prepare for any unexpected disruptions, the district should consider the following:

- \_\_\_ Ensure that all campuses are aware of what to do if a disruption takes place during testing.
- \_\_\_ Instruct testing personnel as to whom they should contact if a problem arises.
- \_\_\_ Make certain that each campus has a plan in place for securing test materials and maintaining confidentiality in the event of a disruption during testing. (Remember that the safety of students and staff is the first consideration.)

When you phone TEA for guidance in handling a disruption, being prepared to answer the following questions will help Student Assessment staff assess the situation:



What happened and where did the disruption take place? What is the nature of the disruption?



How many examinees are affected and are they being monitored while the situation is being assessed?



How far have test sessions progressed? Can testing be resumed the same day? If so, will there be sufficient time for students to finish their assessments?



What are other options for continuing testing as soon as possible, considering the situation?



If testing cannot resume the same day, what efforts can be made to maintain test security and integrity?



## **Training**




Training is one of the most effective activities in which a district testing coordinator can invest time and resources. Preparing for and conducting as many training sessions as possible will be one of the district coordinator's best tools for avoiding mistakes. Make certain that adequate time is allocated for these sessions so that all major topics are addressed, and be sure to conduct all training for campus coordinators by the deadline(s) specified in the Calendar of Events in the *2011 District and Campus Coordinator Manual*.


### ☒ **Develop a training plan.**

- \_\_\_ Attend district coordinator training.
- \_\_\_ Sign your security oath.
- \_\_\_ Review the training guidelines and familiarize yourself with the current *2011 District and Campus Coordinator Manual*.
- \_\_\_ Schedule a sufficient number of training sessions (including make-up sessions) and allow enough time to adequately train campus coordinators.
- \_\_\_ Give coordinators ample notice of the scheduled training dates.
- \_\_\_ Make facility arrangements for holding training sessions.
- \_\_\_ Develop training materials for the sessions. Include topics on the 14-point plan requirements and the procedures for signing oaths.
- \_\_\_ Assemble training materials or guidelines that campus coordinators should use for their test administrator training.

Refer to the Student Assessment Division website to access the December 2010 Education Service Center training PowerPoint presentation for material that can be used in your local training sessions.

### ☒ **Train campus coordinators on what to do BEFORE each test administration.**

- \_\_\_ Read and be familiar with the coordinator and test administrator manuals.
- \_\_\_ Sign a security oath.
-  \_\_\_ Be knowledgeable of the secure materials topics that pertain to the proper procedures for storing, distributing, and tracking secure items.
-  \_\_\_ Know when shipments arrive and verify immediately that all materials have been received.
-  \_\_\_ Ensure that your campus has sufficient quantities of materials. Be sure to take into account special administrations that require additional Form 1 booklets (oral administrations, dyslexia bundled accommodations, etc.).
- \_\_\_ Designate test administrators and monitors. (Remind coordinators about the qualification guidelines for participating in state assessments. Encourage campuses to identify and train as many personnel as possible.)

- \_\_\_\_ Identify the certified professional who will be responsible for each (if any) paraprofessional who will be participating in testing.
- \_\_\_\_ Make sure to schedule a sufficient number of training sessions (including make-up sessions) and allow enough time to adequately train all testing personnel.
- \_\_\_\_ Make the necessary facility arrangements to hold training sessions, and give testing personnel ample notice of training dates.
- \_\_\_\_ Conduct training sessions, verify attendance, and retain attendance sign-in sheets. Encourage coordinators to retain copies of training materials and agendas in case questions arise or testing irregularities occur.
-  \_\_\_\_ Ensure that procedures are in place for transferring examinees and testing materials from one area to another and that testing personnel are aware of the monitoring requirements when doing so. (Remind coordinators that students should handle their materials only during the test session and are never permitted to transport these items outside the testing environment.)
- \_\_\_\_ Arrange for testing rooms and organize test sessions. Be sure to take make-up testing into consideration when applicable.
- \_\_\_\_ Determine how the campus will accommodate students who may need extra time to complete their assessments. Although campuses are not required to test beyond the regular school hours, coordinators should identify and prepare for issues that tend to arise later in the day – e.g., students needing to transfer responses, collecting materials, checking for blank answer documents, etc.
- \_\_\_\_ Make sure to have a sufficient number of blank seating charts prepared (be sure to account for areas used for overflow or for consolidating late testers.) Ensure that the charts have space on which to record the required information and are appropriate for the layout of each test session.
- \_\_\_\_ Confirm that you have received and used updated information regarding the testing requirements and accommodations for students receiving special education and Section 504 services.
- \_\_\_\_ Review ID sheets and applicable answer documents.
- \_\_\_\_ Supervise the verification of precoded materials and answer documents.
- \_\_\_\_ Supervise the hand-gridding of scorable test booklets and blank answer documents.
- \_\_\_\_ Walk through each testing room prior to testing and verify that no visible instructional aids are present and that the environment is appropriate for testing. (Keep in mind that many errors involving a failure to conceal instructional aids result from transferring examinees to rooms that the campus did not originally intend to use as testing areas.)
- \_\_\_\_ Confirm that all eligible examinees have been accounted for and have been assigned the correct test.
- \_\_\_\_ Ensure that arrangements have been made to assess any homebound students who have been identified as eligible testers.

☒ **Train campus coordinators on what to do DURING each test administration.**



\_\_\_ Verify and account for all materials before and after testing each day.



\_\_\_ Use a Materials Control Form when distributing secure test materials to test administrators.

\_\_\_ Verify that all test administrators have been issued the correct assessments, answer documents, manipulatives, and test administrator manuals.

\_\_\_ Confirm that all students have been directed to and are present in their designated testing areas.

\_\_\_ Monitor testing (i.e., visit each testing area to ensure test administrators are actively monitoring and periodically reminding students to record their responses on the answer document).

\_\_\_ Confirm that a seating chart has been completed for each test session. Make sure seating charts are also completed for test sessions involving students who have been moved or transferred. Remind test administrators to record seating information for any late-arriving examinees.

\_\_\_ Verify that all calculator memories have been cleared and that all testing areas have a sufficient number of allowable reference materials.

\_\_\_ Ensure that students are being issued the appropriate tests and have the correct corresponding answer document.

\_\_\_ Ensure that all test administrators are personally distributing test materials to examinees – do not allow students to pass materials to one another. To avoid switching answer documents, test administrators should be especially careful when issuing materials to students with the same or similar names.

\_\_\_ Be aware of any appearance of impropriety (i.e., make sure coordinators and test administrators know how to avoid situations that might lead to allegations of viewing, discussing, or scoring test materials).

\_\_\_ Ensure that test administrators are verifying that students have marked their responses on their answer documents or their scorable test booklets before they leave the testing room.

\_\_\_ Be accessible in case problems arise.

☒ **Train campus coordinators on what to do AFTER each test administration.**





\_\_\_ Direct the collection of materials from the test administrators.



\_\_\_ Account for every answer document.

\_\_\_ Account for every test booklet and secure linguistic simplification guide (this includes any overage or transferred materials).

\_\_\_ Verify that the correct score code has been marked on each answer document and that all hand-gridding and transcribing have been properly completed. (Remind coordinators that testing personnel may **not** erase stray marks or darken answer-choice circles on students' answer documents and scorable test booklets.)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Confirm that each examinee has recorded responses on his or her answer document. **If a blank answer document is discovered during this process, the district must contact the TEA Student Assessment Division to request permission to inspect the booklet and transcribe any responses the student may have recorded there.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ Follow procedures for properly boxing and labeling materials for return to the district testing coordinator. Do not combine TAKS materials [which includes TAKS (Accommodated) and TAKS–M] with Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) materials, and do not mix materials from one administration with any other.
-  \_\_\_\_\_ Recheck the secure storage area for stray items (especially overage or unused materials) before returning materials to the district coordinator.
-  \_\_\_\_\_ Maintain all inventory records and packaging information in the event a problem arises and materials need to be accounted for.

## Things to Consider DURING an Administration



### **Monitoring and Oversight**






During testing, district coordinators should be available to answer questions and resolve issues. Monitoring campuses during an administration can help confirm that procedures are being followed and can minimize the risk of error. Principals and campus testing coordinators play a crucial role in this effort, as they in turn are required to ensure that each test administrator is actively monitoring and that all testing personnel are adhering to the proper assessment procedures.

#### ☒ **Verify that campuses are properly monitoring test sessions.**

- \_\_\_ Test administration personnel must check to see if test administrators have all necessary materials (e.g., test administrator manuals, test booklets and answer documents, mathematics charts, etc.).
- \_\_\_ Campus principals and coordinators must verify that test administrators are actively monitoring examinees.
- \_\_\_ Testing personnel should verify that all testing areas are free from instructional displays. (In situations where the campus must relocate examinees, the area to which the students will be moved should also be checked.)
- \_\_\_ Students who have not completed testing should be monitored properly during breaks.
- \_\_\_ Testing personnel must ensure that students are being administered the appropriate tests and have been issued the correct corresponding answer documents.
- \_\_\_ All test administrators are required to ensure that students have marked their responses on their answer documents or in their scorable test booklets before they leave the testing room.
- \_\_\_ Set up a line of communication so that campuses can contact you or district testing staff.
- \_\_\_ Arrange for continual coverage for answering calls throughout the testing week.

#### ☒ **Verify that campuses are following procedures for secure materials handling.**



- \_\_\_ Check to ensure that campuses are following proper check-in/check-out procedures and are using materials control documents.
-  \_\_\_ Check to verify that campuses are documenting security numbers for overage materials and booklets transferred to other districts or alternative education facilities.
-  \_\_\_ Ensure that campuses are properly transporting test materials to and from the testing areas.
-  \_\_\_ Confirm that campus coordinators and test administrators are ensuring that test booklets are properly secured or monitored while students are taking breaks.
-  \_\_\_ Check to see if campus coordinators are verifying that all booklets are being returned and accounted for each day.
-  \_\_\_ Make certain that campuses are locking and restricting access to the secure storage area.

## Things to Consider AFTER an Administration



### **Accounting for All Secure Materials**

The district's secure materials must be returned in accordance with the procedures and timelines outlined in the *2011 District and Campus Coordinator Manual*. Maintaining adequate oversight and reinforcing the use of proper handling and packing guidelines will help ensure the accurate and complete return of all secure items. Below are some steps that district coordinators should use to account for all materials.

☒ **Monitor campuses and oversee the proper collection of and accounting for secure materials.**

- \_\_\_ Confirm that campuses are accounting for every answer document for each enrolled student and are checking to ensure proper marking of score codes.
- \_\_\_ Ensure that coordinators account for out-of-district and out-of-school examinees (when applicable) and enrolled students at alternative campuses.
- \_\_\_ Verify that the campuses are counting all test booklets, including overage materials that have been issued, and reconciling these materials with the original packing list and materials control documents.
- \_\_\_ Check to be sure that campuses are following the proper packing procedures and labeling boxes correctly.
- \_\_\_ Confirm that campuses have rechecked their secure storage areas for overage and unused secure materials.
- \_\_\_ Verify that all boxes have been checked to ensure that no voided answer documents or scorable booklets were returned with nonscorable materials.

☒ **Receive and inventory materials from the campuses.**

- \_\_\_ Verify receipt of the shipment from each campus.
- \_\_\_ Verify each sequence of numbers handwritten on the campus boxes.
- \_\_\_ If you use a centralized campus check-in approach, verify that all materials are accounted for before campus personnel leave the check-in area.
- \_\_\_ Make certain that materials for different administrations are being kept separate.
- \_\_\_ Keep a list of the contents of each box of scorable and nonscorable materials returned to the state's testing contractor.

☒ **Return materials to the testing contractor.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Verify that all boxes have the proper colored label (scorable vs. nonscorable) for the correct administration and are numbered in sequential order (e.g., Box 5 of 10).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Verify that the contents of each box match the return shipping label, and check to make sure that no bar codes are taped over or covered with other labels.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ensure that all extraneous items (e.g., rulers, charts, nonsecure manuals, etc.) are either disposed of locally or returned separately with nonscorable materials.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ensure that all secure materials remain monitored by certified personnel or in locked storage until the boxes are picked up by the shipper.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make sure that you detach and retain the shipping label receipt(s) for all the box(es) returned.



**Retention of Test Administration Documentation**

Districts are required to retain certain documentation in the event that a discrepancy arises or the receipt of materials cannot be confirmed. Districts must maintain inventory and shipping records, signed security oaths, and seating charts for five years following a test administration.

☒ **Monitor the retention of test administration documentation.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Determine where test administration documentation for each campus will be stored. Ensure that this location is secure and that the documentation cannot be subsequently altered.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Determine in what format the test administration documentation will be kept (e.g., electronic files, hard copies, etc.).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Verify that campuses have collected signed security oaths for all testing personnel.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Confirm that campuses have collected seating charts for each test session. Make certain that the charts are complete and accurate, and ensure that coordinators verify that the charts contain the required information.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Confirm that this documentation is being retained and stored in the selected location.



## Common Testing Irregularities – How to Avoid and Address Them

The situations described below represent several of the more common mistakes that occur before, during, and after testing. Examples of some of these irregularities are provided, along with ways to avoid making such mistakes and to address them if they do occur.

### ✗ Individualized Education Program (IEP) Implementation Issues

#### Examples:

- ▶ A student was administered TAKS when he or she should have taken TAKS (Accommodated).
- ▶ A student was provided an unapproved accommodation or did not receive an accommodation that was documented in his or her IEP.

For more information about testing accommodations, please refer to the *2010–2011 Accommodations Manual* located on the Student Assessment Division website at:

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=2147489295>

#### How to avoid:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Verify with the appropriate campus personnel that you are using the most up-to-date information regarding the testing requirements and accommodations for students receiving special education and Section 504 services. Confirm that this information is also correct for any newly enrolled students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Verify with coordinators and test administrators the accommodations and resources to be provided to each student.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ensure that campus coordinators are cognizant of recent changes in testing requirements for students receiving special education services.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Establish procedures for communicating to the appropriate campus personnel invalid admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee testing decisions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Account for appropriate test materials – booklets and answer documents – for each examinee with an IEP.

#### Examples of how to address certain IEP errors:

- ▶ A TAKS (Accommodated) tester was issued and completed a TAKS assessment.

Students administered TAKS instead of TAKS (Accommodated) **CANNOT** be retested with TAKS (Accommodated). **If the mistake is discovered before scorable materials are shipped, the district should consult with the student's parents/guardians to determine whether the assessment should be invalidated or submitted to be scored.** If the decision is made to submit the test to be scored and it is a primary administration, the TEST TAKEN field on the student's answer document should be coded to indicate TAKS.

- ▶ *A TAKS (Accommodated) tester was issued and completed a TAKS–M assessment.*

In the event this error is detected before the end of the administration, **districts can contact TEA for permission to give the correct assessment. Consent to reassess the student must also be requested from the parents/guardians. Regardless of whether permission is obtained, the TAKS–M test should be voided.** If the parent denies permission to reassess the student, a TAKS (Accommodated) answer document or scorable test booklet marked with a score code of “O” should be submitted to account for the student.

- ▶ *A student was not provided a documented accommodation.*

If this kind of mistake is discovered while the student is testing, districts can, in most cases, still provide the accommodation. If the error is not detected until after the assessment is complete, the district must consult with the parents/guardians to determine if the assessment should be invalidated or submitted to be scored.

## ✗ Eligibility Errors

### Examples:

- ▶ A newly enrolled student was not administered the grade 5 TAKS reading retest.
- ▶ An English language learner (ELL) student whose parents had waived district ESL services was not administered the TELPAS assessment.
- ▶ A student eligible for a retest administration was not directed from his/her home room to the proper location and was not assessed.

### How to avoid:

- \_\_\_ Ensure that you have identified and accounted for all eligible testers. Did you check with the appropriate campus personnel to make sure there are no newly enrolled students?
- \_\_\_ Verify the testing status of all newly enrolled students.
- \_\_\_ Confirm with the appropriate campus personnel (or by referring to students' paperwork such as LPAC documentation) that you are using the most up-to-date information regarding students' testing eligibility.
- \_\_\_ Verify your roster(s) to confirm where students are supposed to be testing.
- \_\_\_ Establish procedures for ensuring that all students are present in or directed to the correct testing room.
- \_\_\_ Have a process in place to confirm after testing that all students were administered the correct assessments.



Many eligibility errors, when identified in a timely manner, can be resolved with minimal impact to students. Testing personnel should be instructed to immediately notify their campus or district coordinator if they suspect a student is being or has been tested incorrectly so TEA can be contacted for guidance in addressing the issue.

Examples of how to address certain eligibility errors:

- ▶ *A TAKS tester who was not receiving special education services was issued and completed a TAKS (Accommodated) assessment.*

**Students administered TAKS (Accommodated) instead of TAKS CANNOT be retested with TAKS, because the test items are identical. This is also the case if TAKS is administered to students scheduled to take TAKS (Accommodated).** If the mistake occurs during a primary administration and is detected before scorable materials are returned to the state's contractor, the student's answer document should be coded for the test that was administered, NOT the test that the student should have taken. The district should notify the student's parents/guardians of the error and inform them that the Confidential Student Report (CSR) will reflect that TAKS (Accommodated) was administered.

- ▶ *A TAKS tester was issued and completed a TAKS–M assessment.*

If this error is discovered before the end of the administration, districts can contact TEA for permission to give the correct assessment. Consent to reassess the student should also be requested from the parents/guardians. **Regardless of whether permission is obtained, the TAKS–M test should be voided.** If the parent declines, a TAKS answer document or scorable test booklet marked with a score code of "O" should be submitted to account for the student.

- ▶ *An exit level retester was not administered one of the subject-area assessments.*

**If this irregularity is detected within the testing week, districts should immediately contact the Student Assessment Division. Depending on the circumstances, TEA may grant permission to test the student on a non-scheduled day.**

## **✗ Improper Accounting for Secure Materials**

Examples:

- ▶ A student's completed answer document was lost or misplaced.
- ▶ Testing personnel lost or misplaced one or more test booklets or other secure materials.
- ▶ A test administrator did not return testing materials following each day's administration.
- ▶ A campus coordinator or district testing coordinator failed to return secure material by the published dates.

How to avoid:

- \_\_\_ Verify that all test booklets and answer documents are accounted for.
- \_\_\_ Check all test booklets to make sure that no answer documents were left inside accidentally.
- \_\_\_ Bundle test materials from the same test administration – do not mix them with any other test administration.
- \_\_\_ Properly label boxes (e.g., 1 of 5, 2 of 5, etc.) and identify and track for your records which boxes contain which materials in case boxes are lost in transit or questions arise regarding the return of these materials.



A majority of the incidents reported to TEA that involve the loss or late return of secure materials result from not establishing or implementing basic inventory procedures (e.g., not using materials control documents, not following check-in/check-out procedures, and/or not accounting for, at the end of each day, the items that were issued to test administrators).

If testing personnel locate any secure materials that were not returned following an administration, contact TEA immediately. District coordinators should always question how these materials were discovered in order to determine whether the items were kept secure or if there was a breach in confidentiality.

## **✖ Monitoring Errors**

### Examples:

- ▶ A test administrator left a room unmonitored while students were testing.
- ▶ A test administrator left secure materials unattended or secure online assessments open and visible.
- ▶ A test administrator accepted a blank answer document from an examinee.
- ▶ Students who had not finished testing were not properly monitored during a break.
- ▶ A test administrator did not actively monitor students and did not detect the improper use of a highlighter, dictionary, or calculator.
- ▶ A test administrator failed to properly monitor a test session and did not ensure that students worked independently and/or did not notice that an examinee placed or received a cell phone call or text message during a test administration.

Note: Students are **NOT** permitted to have cell phones turned on during testing. Districts are required to have procedures in place to prevent the use of cell phones during test administrations.

### How to avoid:

- \_\_\_ Emphasize that test administrators are not allowed to leave examinees or materials unattended.
- \_\_\_ Instruct test administrators to immediately notify the appropriate testing personnel when improper student behavior has been detected.
- \_\_\_ Clarify with your test administrators which supplemental materials – such as highlighters, charts, rulers, and/or dictionaries – are allowed or required for each subject.
- \_\_\_ Clearly establish which test administrators will be relieved during breaks and by whom.
- \_\_\_ Verify that all forms of visual aids have been covered or removed from the testing rooms.
- \_\_\_ Periodically check test sessions to ensure that test administrators are actively monitoring.



Monitoring-related errors continue to be the most common types of incidents reported to TEA. Regardless of whether these mistakes directly or indirectly contribute to testing irregularities, they remain one of the more problematic assessment issues that districts should address. Such errors can also be detrimental to students. Accepting a blank

answer document, for example, may result in a student not receiving credit for a test that he or she took. Other monitoring-related errors might lead to breaches in confidentiality that could place students' test scores in question.

For ALL incidents where examinees were left unmonitored, secure materials were left unattended, or students were issued or had access to nonallowable manipulatives or instructional aids, **districts are required to provide a determination** of whether confidentiality was breached or if the irregularity compromised the validity of a student's assessment.

Examples of how to address certain monitoring errors:

- ▶ *While packing scorable materials, the campus coordinator discovered that a test administrator had accepted a blank answer document.*

In this situation, the campus coordinator should first notify the district coordinator, who can then contact TEA and request permission to confirm whether the student has marked answers in the test booklet and, if so, to transcribe those responses onto the answer document. **Campus testing personnel should be reminded in training and during testing that they are NOT permitted to view or transcribe the contents of a student's test booklet without PRIOR authorization from TEA.**

- ▶ *A test administrator left examinees unmonitored and/or secure materials unattended.*

Any time students are left unmonitored or secure materials are unattended during testing, the campus or district coordinator must assess the situation to determine whether a breach in confidentiality has occurred. If the district concludes that there was no breach, students may be allowed to resume testing. If cheating occurred or secure content was compromised, the district must decide whether the tests of the affected students should be invalidated or submitted for scoring. Remember that breaches in confidentiality can occur even during a brief lapse in monitoring.

- ▶ *A test administrator was not actively monitoring and did not detect that a student had broken the seal to and completed a portion of the next subject-area test.*

If this type of error is detected before the examinee leaves the testing area, immediately contact TEA for guidance. If the student has been dismissed from a monitored environment, he or she will not be permitted to complete the test on the regularly scheduled day, and the district will need to determine whether the subject-area section should be invalidated or submitted to be scored.



District coordinators should evaluate the information and statements provided and make a determination regarding whether testing personnel were or were not actively monitoring. This determination should be clearly communicated to TEA in the incident report submission and/or documentation.

## **✖ Procedural Errors**

### Examples:

- ▶ An unauthorized individual (e.g., a student or untrained personnel) was permitted to transport secure test material.
- ▶ A test administrator did not issue the correct materials (i.e., charts, rulers, #2 pencils, dictionaries, calculators) or students were incorrectly permitted to use nonallowable materials.
- ▶ A student was administered a test on the wrong day.
- ▶ An examinee was not provided the dyslexia bundled accommodations over the required two-day period.
- ▶ A student was not issued the correct Form 1 test booklet for an oral or dyslexia bundled accommodations administration.
- ▶ Testing personnel did not use the test administration directions or failed to read the test administration script verbatim as outlined in the test administration directions.
- ▶ Personnel were permitted to administer tests, monitor test sessions, or handle secure materials even though they had not been properly trained.
- ▶ A TELPAS writing collection was not submitted in accordance with required assembly criteria.
- ▶ A test administrator failed to remove or cover all instructional displays.
- ▶ Scorable materials were returned with nonscorable materials.

### How to avoid:

- \_\_\_ Notify coordinators and test administrators which personnel are authorized and delegated to transport secure test materials or to monitor or relieve test administrators.
- \_\_\_ Make sure that coordinators verify with test administrators which supplemental materials are allowed or required for each subject and for each test.
- \_\_\_ Confirm that a sufficient number of staff have been properly trained in test administration procedures.
- \_\_\_ Make certain that coordinators have verified that all test administrators are in possession of the appropriate manual(s) and directions on the days of testing.
- \_\_\_ Verify that testing personnel were issued the correct manuals in advance of training so they could read them thoroughly.
- \_\_\_ Confirm that the contents of each box match the return shipping label and are not mixed between administrations.
- \_\_\_ Check all boxes to make sure that no voided answer documents or scorable booklets are returned with nonscorable materials.

### Examples of how to address certain procedural errors:

- ▶ *A campus coordinator did not issue the required Form 1 test booklet for a student receiving an oral administration of the mathematics assessment.*

This type of error is most often detected during an assessment and can easily be avoided by having test administrators verify that all the test booklets they have been issued for oral administrations are Form 1. If a test administrator encounters a discrepancy while reading test questions or answer choices, he or she should immediately notify the campus coordinator so a Form 1 booklet can be provided. **Make sure that Form 1 booklets are accessible to all campus coordinators.** In the rare event that a Form 1 booklet is not available, the campus coordinator can issue the test administrator a booklet with a form number that matches the student's. This second option is less preferable, as the use of Form 1 booklets is intended to limit unnecessary access to secure field-test items while still meeting the needs of students who qualify for this type of accommodation.

- ▶ *A student who was scheduled to be administered a reading test with dyslexia bundled accommodations was not issued the proper Form 1 test booklet for the mathematics assessment.*

Due to the multiple approaches for resolving this situation, districts should contact TEA for guidance when this type of incident occurs. Callers should be prepared to provide the grade level involved and at what point in the administration the error was discovered.

## ✗ Incidents That Can Result in a Referral to Educator Certification and Standards

### Examples:

- ▶ Testing personnel viewed a test before, during, or after an assessment without authorization.
- ▶ Testing personnel discussed or revealed secure test content or student responses.
- ▶ Testing personnel made a copy of secure materials without permission from TEA.
- ▶ Testing personnel scored student tests.
- ▶ Testing personnel directly or indirectly assisted students with responses to test questions.
- ▶ Testing personnel tampered with student responses.

### How to avoid:

- \_\_\_ Stress that test content should not be viewed or discussed even AFTER the test administration has been completed (e.g., in the classroom with students or in a faculty or team meeting). This applies to discussions regarding the **specific content** of tests. It is acceptable for teachers to talk with their students about their testing experience or the test in general as long as the conversation does not become specific.
- \_\_\_ Reinforce to all testing personnel the proper procedures for conducting an oral administration.
- \_\_\_ Discuss with test administrators the proper way in which examinees should be prompted to bubble in answer documents. Remind all campus personnel that erasing stray marks or darkening response ovals is strictly prohibited.
- \_\_\_ Verify that campuses have designated a sufficient number of testing personnel to adequately monitor the test administration.

Incidents involving alleged irregularities that may result in a referral to the Educator Certification and Standards Division should be reported to the Student Assessment Division Security Task Force as soon as the district coordinator is made aware of the situation.



## Incident Reporting



### **Reporting Testing Irregularities**

Despite how well prepared testing personnel may be, the possibility still exists that a mistake will be made. When incidents occur, it is important to have procedures in place to help ensure that all the necessary information is gathered so the district can make a determination about what occurred. **All testing irregularities must be reported to the TEA Student Assessment Division.** Incidents involving alleged irregularities that may result in a referral to the Educator Certification and Standards Division should be reported to the Student Assessment Division Security Task Force as soon as the district coordinator is made aware of the situation. Please ensure that all testing personnel are aware of their obligation to report testing irregularities and can easily access your local reporting procedures.

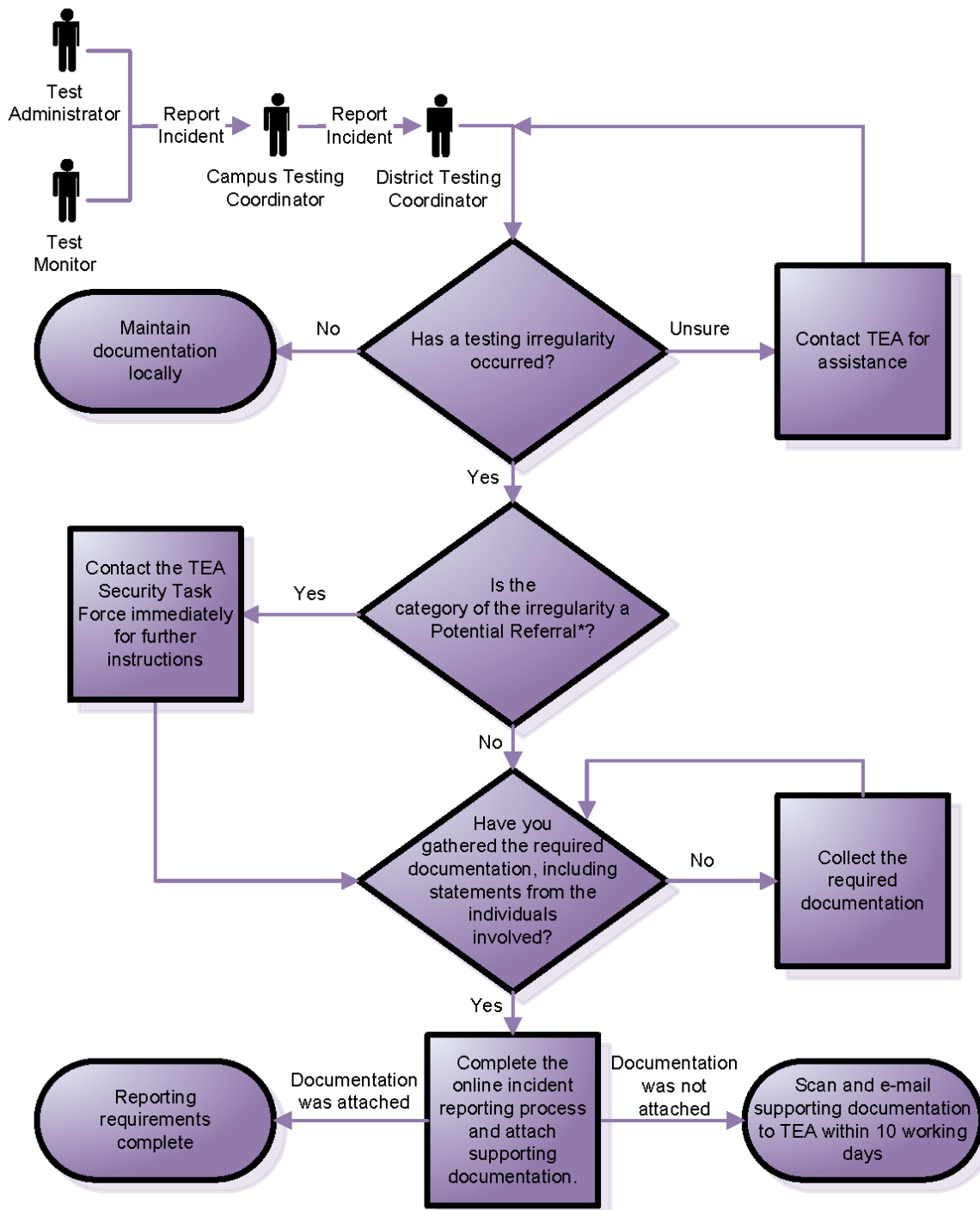
#### **Please DON'T ASSUME!!!**

Student Assessment staff are experienced in assisting districts with handling and reporting testing irregularities and are available to provide guidance for district personnel. Do not hesitate to contact staff at 512-463-9536 if you have questions about an incident that occurred in your district and/or the correct way to report it.

To aid district coordinators, a flowchart depicting the incident reporting process has been provided in Figure 1 on the following page.



Figure 1: Incident Reporting Process



\* Potential referral to the Educator Certification and Standards Division



## **Investigating and Documenting Testing Irregularities**

District testing coordinators or their designees are responsible for investigating potential testing violations. Statements and reports collected during these investigations should:

- clearly outline the sequence of events,
- explain exactly what happened and how it occurred,
- include information about how the problem was resolved or remedied, and
- include a district determination in the matter.

All incidents that result in a deviation from documented testing procedures require an incident report and statements from individuals involved to be submitted to TEA via the Online Incident Reporting Process. Documentation for irregularities that involve the loss of secure materials or that could result in a referral to the Educator Certification and Standards Division **must** include a Corrective Action Plan. For **any** incident, TEA may request additional information such as a Corrective Action Plan or require certain documentation to be maintained at the district level.

**All required documentation, including statements from individuals involved, should be submitted within 10 working days of the district testing coordinator being made aware of the incident.** If more time is needed, contact TEA at 512-463-9536.

Separate statements from the individual(s) involved in an irregularity should be typed, signed, and submitted on district/campus letterhead, stationery, or plain paper. Do not use the online incident report form for this purpose. Assistance from the district in submitting typed information is greatly appreciated.

Below are some guidelines to help assess an incident and ensure proper reporting.

☒ **Provide a clear determination of what occurred.**

- \_\_\_ Determine whether state-mandated testing procedures were violated.
- \_\_\_ Ensure that all individuals who were involved in or may have information about the incident have been interviewed.
- \_\_\_ Determine exactly what happened and why it happened.
- \_\_\_ Determine who is responsible and how the error was discovered.
- \_\_\_ Prepare a timeline, if necessary, to establish when events occurred.
- \_\_\_ Address and resolve all discrepancies (if any) in the statements submitted by the individuals involved.

☒ **Properly document the incident.**

- \_\_\_ Note at what campus the incident occurred and during which administration (month, assessment – e.g., TAKS, TAKS (Accommodated), etc., grade level, subject area, etc.).
- \_\_\_ Obtain separate typed, signed, and dated statements from all individuals who were involved in or may have information about the incident.

- \_\_\_\_ Verify that all statements include the name and role (title) of all individuals and how they were involved. Make sure the statements include a description of the incident from each individual's perspective.
- \_\_\_\_ If TEA was contacted for guidance, document when the contact was made and with whom you spoke. If the district was granted permission to take a certain action or instructed on how to remedy an error, include that information in your report.
- \_\_\_\_ Make certain that the incident documentation includes the district's determination of what happened and how the error was addressed, remedied, or resolved.
- \_\_\_\_ If the irregularity involved any examinees potentially gaining an unfair advantage on an assessment, include information regarding whether the district decided to invalidate the assessment or submit the test(s) to be scored.
- \_\_\_\_ If an examinee who receives special education or Section 504 services was given the wrong assessment, include information about whether the student's parents were informed and whether permission was obtained to administer the correct test (if possible).
- \_\_\_\_ Always document whether local action was taken against educator(s) or student(s).

☒ **Provide a corrective action plan if required or requested.**

- \_\_\_\_ Ensure that the plan includes a brief summary of the incident.
- \_\_\_\_ Include a description of how and why the incident occurred.
- \_\_\_\_ Include a description of the specific procedure(s) that will be implemented to prevent future occurrences of this type of violation.
- \_\_\_\_ Include the name and role (title) of the person(s) responsible.
- \_\_\_\_ Include any local actions taken against educator(s) as a result of the district's investigation.
- \_\_\_\_ Make certain that the corrective action plan has been signed by the superintendent or chief administrative officer.



## **Submitting Incident Documentation to TEA**

To complete the process of submitting an incident report online, district testing coordinators or their designees must provide all the required information requested. Submitters will receive confirmation that their report has been accepted, and an incident identification number will be issued for tracking purposes. District coordinators will be notified via a return e-mail when an incident has been submitted for their district provided that a valid e-mail address is on file in the Texas Education Directory (AskTED). For more information about this directory, refer to the following link:

<http://mansfield.tea.state.tx.us/tea.askted.web/Forms/Home.aspx>.

Currently, the online submission tool does not permit users to correct or update report information once it has been submitted and an incident identification number has been issued. Submitters are strongly encouraged to have all information available regarding the incident **BEFORE** starting the reporting process. If districts need to update or change information once a report has been submitted, they can contact the Security Task Force at 512-463-9536 and reference the incident identification number they received when the report was originally submitted.

### A Special Note Regarding Supporting Documentation

The online submission tool allows submitters to upload electronic files. Users can attach supporting documentation so that all submission requirements can be fulfilled in one simple step. Because statements from individuals involved require a signature, the physical documentation will need to be converted into an electronic format. Districts able to scan and save these signed statements and supporting documentation into an electronic file (e.g., a portable document file or PDF) are strongly encouraged to use this option. Scanned files can be easily attached during the submission process and then stored locally to meet retention requirements. Although the system accepts up to three (3) attachments, it is preferred that the documentation be combined into just one scanned file.

If the district chooses not to use this feature, all supporting documentation must be scanned and submitted by e-mail to [testsecurity@tea.state.tx.us](mailto:testsecurity@tea.state.tx.us) within 10 working days of the incident. If more time is needed, districts should notify TEA at 512-463-9536. If your district does not have scanning capability, please contact the Security Task Force at 512-463-9536 for assistance.

Please do not include a copy of the online incident report form with your documentation.

**For any documentation submitted via e-mail, please make sure to reference the incident identification number that is provided after the final step in the online submission process.**



## **Instructions for Completing the Online Incident Reporting Process**

Below are step-by-step instructions for using the online submission process to submit an incident report and supporting documentation.

### **How to Submit an Online Incident Report Form and Associated Documentation**

1. Access the Online Incident Reporting Process page located on the TEA Student Assessment Division website at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/admin/incidents/online/>.
2. Review the procedures for reporting an irregularity online and then click the link titled "Click here to submit an online incident report." NOTE: The Microsoft Word incident report document is no longer in use and has been removed from our website.
3. Select your district and campus from the drop-down menus, select the "Yes" or "No" button to identify whether you are the district coordinator, and complete the required information in the report form.
4. Attach electronic file(s) containing supporting documentation and complete the submission process. If you do not choose to use the online system's attachment feature, all supporting documentation must be scanned and submitted by e-mail to [testsecurity@tea.state.tx.us](mailto:testsecurity@tea.state.tx.us) within 10 working days of the incident. Be sure to include the incident identification number provided upon completion of the online submission with each set of documentation.

**If you encounter difficulty using the online incident reporting system, please contact a member of the Security Task Force at 512-463-9536 for assistance.**



## **What to Expect Following the Submission of an Incident Report Form and Associated Documentation**

Following every test administration, all incident reports and supporting information received by the Security Task Force are assessed for completeness to ensure that the required documentation has been submitted for each irregularity. Reports are then carefully reviewed, and a determination is made by the Security Task Force regarding the disposition of each incident. Correspondence is then generated to notify the superintendent and district testing coordinator of the findings.

This process involves several steps to ensure a complete and accurate review of each case. Incidents are grouped by districts for reporting purposes in an effort to reduce the amount of correspondence that is mailed. In cases involving more severe irregularities, individual letters are generally sent.

Depending on the size of the test administration, it can take up to several months to process all the incident reports submitted. This process can be delayed longer if districts do not submit the required documentation within the 10-day timeframe and/or provide sufficient information upon which to base a final determination.

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# Appendix A

## Appendix A: Best Practices and Tips from the Field

Districts from all over Texas have employed innovative tools and techniques to help ensure error-free test administrations and for accurately tracking and successfully returning all secure materials. Below are some helpful hints gathered from the field that illustrate effective practices you can consider for use in your district.

### Successful Practices Used in Districts **BEFORE** a Test Administration Begins



Campus coordinators are provided with detailed checklists of all duties and reminders of tasks to be performed before testing. Principals verify that the checklists are used.



Only the officially designated campus coordinator is allowed to sign for and receive boxes of testing materials.



Boxes of testing materials are signed for and placed directly in secure storage.



When campuses receive boxes, two individuals count and verify the contents of all boxes. These individuals provide their signatures to indicate that they have followed all appropriate procedures and that all materials have been accounted for.



Some districts have indicated that they have purchased or are interested in purchasing hand-held scanners that enable them to inventory and track all secure materials electronically.



The contents of boxes are verified against the packing list.



All campus and district storage areas for testing materials have a sufficient number of shelves, rolling carts, and tables for materials to be sorted and tracked. Any hiding places that would allow secure materials to be misplaced or left behind are identified.



Principals are asked to designate in writing all individuals who will have access to the secure storage area.



Districts provide appropriate training for non-certified personnel who will have access to secure test materials (e.g., drivers, warehouse staff). Some districts require these individual to sign locally-developed security oaths.



Certified professionals sign a form acknowledging their supervisory role when assigned a paraprofessional who will be serving as a test administrator.



Districts establish a policy regarding an ending time for testing. This avoids issues of one campus allowing more or less time for students to finish testing than other campuses.



Districts/campuses reduce the amount of storage space required for maintaining documentation for five years by scanning documents and storing them electronically.



For any district office personnel who will be assigned to campuses to monitor testing, provide the same level of training that was given to the individuals they will be monitoring. Monitors should know testing procedures well enough to be able to recognize possible irregularities.



## Successful Practices Used in Districts DURING a Test Administration



Campus personnel verify that they have used their detailed checklists of duties and responsibilities during testing.



Requests for extra materials are made in writing, and it is recorded in writing that the materials are picked up by the campus coordinator in person. Signatures and detailed paperwork are always used when materials from district coverage are distributed to campus coordinators.



The campus coordinator makes a “first hour” check of all test sessions to ensure that all students are in the correct location and have been issued the correct assessments.

## Successful Practices Used in Districts AFTER a Test Administration



Campus personnel verify that they are using their detailed checklists when assembling materials for return.



At district check-in, personnel inspect, physically count, and verify the contents of all campus boxes before the boxes are sealed for shipping. (Some districts require all boxes to be counted and verified by at least two persons, whose signatures indicate the shipment is complete.)



The materials returned are always verified against the packing list.



A detailed list of the contents of each box is generated before the box is returned to the contractor. Personnel keep these lists on file in case questions arise or discrepancies are reported.



Only campus coordinators return testing materials to the district coordinator.



Some districts complete a secure storage area cleaning checklist to ensure no secure materials have been left in the storage area.



If a testing irregularity has occurred, all involved individuals write a statement on the day the incident was detected or as soon as possible thereafter.

# Appendix B

## Appendix B: Background Information Relating to the Implementation of the 14-Point Test Security Plan

In response to recommendations made by TEA's Task Force on Test Integrity and to further ongoing efforts to improve security measures in the state's assessment program, TEA introduced in June 2007 a comprehensive 14-point plan designed to assure parents, students, and the public that test results are meaningful and valid. The Student Assessment Division began introducing portions of the plan starting in spring 2008, and all recommendations have since been implemented with the exception of recommendation #4.

Efforts relating to the execution of recommendation #4 – to develop a transparent method to annually identify statistically irregular patterns of test answers that may indicate cheating to augment other detection methods already in use – initially began with TEA staff identifying companies and individuals with the expertise to assist TEA in the development of these types of analyses, as well as surveying the literature for information that would be helpful in designing a system for conducting the desired analyses, through the issuance of an RFP in March 2008. Only one proposal was received in response to this RFP and it was not responsive to the RFP requirements. TEA included in the RFP for the 2010–2015 assessment program contract the requirement that these analyses be conducted by the selected vendor. It is anticipated that a pilot study will be conducted starting in the spring of 2011.

Beginning with the 2008 administrations, TEA introduced the following 14-point plan measures in accordance to the recommendations made by the Task Force on Test Integrity:

### **Seating Charts**

Seating charts must be completed for each test session conducted by the district, including sessions that result from students being moved or relocated for any reason (overflow and/or consolidation of students, original testing areas becoming unsuitable, etc.). Electronic copies of seating chart examples can be accessed on the Student Assessment Division website at the following address:

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/admin/security/index.html>

Districts may create seating chart templates that best suit their needs; however, the following minimal information must be collected for each test session:

1. The location of the test session must be recorded, including the district and campus names and the room designation. Provide a brief description of the testing area (e.g., classroom, library, cafeteria).
2. The assessment that is being administered at this location must be indicated, including the specific test administered, the subject area (e.g., reading, writing), and the grade level.
3. The first and last name(s) of the test administrator(s)/monitor(s) conducting or involved in the test session must be recorded.
4. The first and last name of each student participating in the assessment must be indicated on the chart at the location where the student was seated for testing. Districts and campuses may include additional information if they choose to do so.

## **Honor Statements**

Beginning in spring 2008, students in grades 9 and 10 as well as exit level examinees were asked to sign an honor statement immediately prior to taking Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) or TAKS (Accommodated) assessments. The following language is what appeared on these examinees' answer documents:

By signing my name, I agree that I will not give or receive unauthorized assistance during the test. I understand that giving or receiving unauthorized assistance during the test is cheating and may result in the invalidation of my test results.

This measure was extended in 2009 to include students taking TAKS Modified (TAKS–M) at grades 9, 10, and 11. Test administrators for TAKS, TAKS (Accommodated), and TAKS–M are provided instructions for prompting students to complete the honor statement but are not required to verify that examinees have signed the statement.

In preparation for the inclusion of honor statements during 2008 and 2009 testing, a sample letter containing suggested wording was made available to districts to aid in communicating information about the new measure. TEA believed that by notifying parents about this new requirement in advance, it would afford them an opportunity to speak to their children about the importance of not providing or receiving assistance on a test and the consequences that can result if cheating occurs. The following figure (Figure 2) represents sample correspondence language in English and in Spanish that districts could adapt and send to the parents of students scheduled to take TAKS, TAKS (Accommodated), or TAKS–M at the applicable grade levels.

Figure 2

Dear Parent/Guardian,

This letter is to let you know of a change that the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has made in testing procedures for the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). Beginning in spring 2008, students in grades 9, 10, and exit level were asked to sign an honor statement before taking TAKS tests. In spring 2009 this measure was extended to students taking TAKS–Modified (TAKS–M) tests. The honor statement is shown below. This statement will be printed on each student’s answer sheet, and students will be asked to sign it before the test begins.

By signing my name, I agree that I will not give or receive unauthorized assistance during the test. I understand that giving or receiving unauthorized assistance during the test is cheating and may result in the invalidation of my test results.

“Invalidation” of test results means that the student’s test would not be scored and the student would not receive test results.

The TAKS tests are required by both state and federal law. The test results are used to monitor and improve public education for all Texas students. The addition of an honor statement is one of several steps the state of Texas is taking to ensure that each student’s test results are an accurate indicator of his or her academic performance. Other state testing programs and college entrance exams include similar honor statements.

I hope that I can count on your support of this new procedure.

Sincerely,

(school principal or superintendent)

Estimado padre de familia o tutor:

Esta carta tiene la finalidad de informarle de un cambio que la Agencia de Educación de Texas (TEA) ha hecho en cuanto a los procedimientos de evaluación de la prueba TAKS. A partir de la primavera del 2008, a los estudiantes en los grados 9, 10 y nivel de salida se les pidió que firmaran un juramento de honor antes de tomar la prueba TAKS. En la primavera del 2009, esta medida se extendió a estudiantes que toman la prueba TAKS–M (TAKS–Modified). Este juramento aparecerá en inglés en cada uno de los documentos de respuesta de la prueba TAKS con el propósito de que los estudiantes lo firmen antes de que empiece la prueba. El juramento al que se hace mención viene enseguida en español.

Al firmar aquí, estoy de acuerdo en que no daré ni recibiré ningún tipo de ayuda que no esté autorizada durante la prueba. Comprendo que dar o recibir ayuda no autorizada durante la prueba es hacer trampa y podría ocasionar la invalidación de los resultados de mi prueba.

La “invalidación” de los resultados de la prueba significa que la prueba del estudiante no será calificada y, en consecuencia, el estudiante no recibirá ningún resultado.

La prueba TAKS es obligatoria de acuerdo con leyes estatales y federales. Los resultados de la prueba se utilizan para evaluar y mejorar el sistema de educación pública de los estudiantes de Texas. El juramento de honor es una de las medidas que el estado de Texas está tomando para asegurarse de que los resultados de la prueba de cada estudiante sea un indicador preciso de su desempeño académico. Existen otros programas de evaluación a nivel estatal, así como pruebas de admisión de algunas universidades, que incluyen juramentos de honor semejantes.

Le agradecemos con anticipación su apoyo para este nuevo procedimiento.

Atentamente,

(Director de la escuela o Superintendente del distrito escolar)

## **Local Investigations and Disciplinary Actions Taken Against Educators and Students**

Two additional reporting procedures were introduced beginning with the 2008 administrations. The first of these required districts to submit the findings from any local investigations conducted in response to the loss of secure materials or irregularities classified as a potential referral to the TEA Educator Certification and Standards Division. Prior to 2008, information of this nature was typically included in a district's incident report documentation and/or the required Corrective Action Plan. As part of the implementation of the 14-point security measures, the guidelines for submitting this information were updated in the *2008 District and Campus Coordinator Manual* to require districts to report any disciplinary action taken against an educator as a result of district investigations. A Corrective Action Plan template was created for the collection of this information, and an electronic version of this document was posted on the Student Assessment Division website at the following address: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/admin/security/index.html>

The second procedure put into place in accordance with the security plan required districts to report any disciplinary action taken against a student for cheating on a state assessment, such as invalidation of the student's test or suspension. An online form, *Locally Determined Disciplinary Actions Form*, was developed for collecting this information and can be accessed and completed via the Student Assessment Division website at: <http://www.txetests.com/DAF/choosedistrict.asp>

## **Document Retention**

At a minimum, districts are required to maintain the following documents for a period of five years following a test administration:

### 1. Testing irregularity and investigation documentation

*Examples:*

- ▶ Statements from individuals involved
- ▶ District investigative reports
- ▶ Verification of training
- ▶ Corrective Action Plans

### 2. Inventory and shipping records

*Examples:*

- ▶ Packing lists
- ▶ Shipper's tracking numbers/freight bill numbers
- ▶ Documentation of any materials loaned to other districts
- ▶ Records of contact with TEA and/or Pearson
- ▶ District inventory records

### 3. Signed security oaths for all testing personnel (with the exception of the district testing coordinator and superintendent/chief administrative officer oaths, which are mailed to the state's testing contractor)

*Examples:*

- ▶ Principal oaths
- ▶ Test administrator oaths (general and administration-specific)
- ▶ Campus coordinator oaths
- ▶ TELPAS rater and verifier oath

### 4. Seating charts

Districts may decide how this documentation is to be stored – e.g., scanned and kept in an electronic format, hard copy – as long as the information is secure and can be retrieved if necessary. Districts may also choose to establish local policies requiring the retention of additional documents.

## **On-Site Monitoring**

TEA used independent test monitors to conduct visits to districts and campuses throughout the 2008, 2009, and 2010 testing years. The Student Assessment Division will continue to coordinate with other TEA divisions to identify campuses where testing will be monitored and/or where visits will occur.

## **Model Policy on Test Integrity and Test Security Procedures**

Recommendation 12 from the 14-point test security plan was for TEA to develop a model policy on test integrity and test security procedures for possible adoption by local school boards. The rationale proposed for the implementation of this recommendation was as follows:

*Procedures to help ensure test security and confidentiality are spelled out in the District and Campus Coordinator Manual that is produced annually for the state assessment program. All individuals involved in the administrations of the state assessments are required to sign oaths indicating they understand test security and confidentiality requirements. By providing a model policy to local school boards for their review and consideration, there is an expectation that districts would be more cognizant of state test security requirements for district personnel.*

District coordinators from across the state were contacted and asked to submit any locally-developed materials that had proven to be helpful in ensuring compliance with state-mandated test security and confidentiality requirements. A focus group consisting of district coordinators was then formed to review the materials submitted, assist in the development of a “best practices” implementation plan, and discuss possible content for the model policy. It was the opinion of the focus group that the *Test Security Supplement* already serves as a “best practices” document and should be used for the implementation of the model policy. Suggestions from the group for improving the supplement were considered, and changes were incorporated into this document for the 2008–2009 school year. The following model policy, to be considered for possible local adoption, was developed based on focus group input.

### **Model Policy**

The (Name of District/Charter) shall comply with all procedures established by TEA in its annual test administration manuals with regard to test security and confidentiality. The superintendent shall be responsible for ensuring that:

- procedures are developed to assure the security and confidentiality of state assessments are in compliance with all requirements established by TEA
- district and campus testing personnel are trained in test security and confidentiality, as well as test administration procedures, in accordance with TEA’s published requirements
- any violation of the state’s security or confidentiality procedures is reported to TEA in accordance with established procedures

TEA’s *Test Security Supplement* shall serve as the “best practices” document to guide the district in the implementation of this policy.



### **Optional Web-based Test Administrator Training Modules**

In response to recommendation #14, TEA developed and deployed in 2010 new Web-based training modules for test administrators to help ensure that test results are meaningful and valid. The modules were provided to supplement the mandatory training required of all personnel involved in testing. This online training is optional but recommended and is designed to be conducted in either a group or individual setting.

The modules address the following topics:

- Active Monitoring: Module 1 explains the expectations for active monitoring and demonstrates how to correctly implement this requirement.
- Distribution of Test Materials: Module 2 familiarizes personnel with common errors made when materials are distributed and offers strategies for preventing these mistakes.
- Proper Handling of Secure Materials: Module 3 addresses the expectations for protecting the contents of secure test materials and presents examples of the risks and consequences of common errors that could result in breaches of security and confidentiality.

# Appendix C

## Appendix C: Differentiating Between Secure and Nonsecure Test Materials

SECURE	NONSECURE
Items That <b>MUST</b> Be Returned in <b>SCORABLE</b> Shipment	Items That <b>MUST</b> Be Returned in <b>SCORABLE</b> Shipment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Used or voided scorable test booklets for TAKS, TAKS (Accommodated), and TAKS–M grade 3 and TELPAS reading grades 2 and 3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Used and voided answer documents†</li> <li>Voided precoded answer documents†</li> <li>Answer Document Packing List</li> <li>Optional Reports Order Form</li> </ul>
Items That <b>MUST</b> Be Returned in <b>NONSCORABLE</b> Shipment	Items That <b>MUST</b> Be Returned in <b>NONSCORABLE</b> Shipment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Used and unused nonscorable TAKS, TAKS (Accommodated), TAKS–M, LAT, and TELPAS reading test booklets, grouped by grade for grades 4-10 and 11/exit level</li> <li>Used and unused nonscorable field-test booklets</li> <li><u>Unused</u> scorable test booklets for TAKS, TAKS (Accommodated), and TAKS–M grade 3 and TELPAS reading grades 2 and 3</li> <li>LAT linguistic simplification guides</li> <li>Braille and large-print materials</li> </ul>	Items That <b>DO NOT</b> Need To Be Returned
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dyslexia proper-nouns lists†</li> <li>Unused or voided precoded labels†</li> <li>Typed or tape-recorded materials†</li> <li>Unused or voided ID sheets</li> <li>Unused answer documents</li> <li>Unused paper bands</li> <li>Science rulers</li> <li>Mathematics or science charts (Remember that charts that have been written on should be destroyed.)</li> <li>Coordinator manuals</li> <li>Coordinator packets</li> <li>Test administrator manuals</li> <li>Packing lists or packing cover sheets</li> <li>Locally developed LAT bilingual glossaries</li> </ul>

†Items that do not have a security bar code but may contain confidential student or testing information

# Appendix D

## Appendix D: Secure Materials Resolution Process

TEA and the state's testing contractor, Pearson, have implemented procedures to assist in the resolution and location of outstanding (missing) secure materials. The secure materials resolution process has been refined over the past year based on feedback from districts. District testing coordinators should carefully note the administration(s) referenced in any correspondence they receive because communications will likely overlap – i.e., a district may receive a notification for outstanding January and February materials and another notification shortly thereafter regarding April materials. If it becomes necessary for the district testing coordinator to contact Pearson or TEA, he or she should reference the identification number in the bottom left corner of the correspondence. An explanation of the process, including what to expect at each stage, is summarized below.

### Step 1

When Pearson receives nonscorable shipments following a test administration, boxes are sorted and grouped by district. This allows Pearson to identify any districts from which it has not received any shipment.



#### **Notification Sent – No Shipment Received**

If Pearson does not receive any boxes/materials from a district, the district testing coordinator is contacted and asked if the material has been shipped; if so, the coordinator is asked to provide tracking numbers. This notification generally takes place 3 to 5 days after the deadline for submitting nonscorable materials. Pearson will attempt to call or e-mail the district testing coordinator regarding missing shipments. Labeling boxes incorrectly can also trigger this notification.

### Step 2

Following the receipt of districts' shipments, Pearson next begins the process of scanning the unique security number printed on every test booklet and LAT linguistic simplification guide. Each box from a district is opened, the contents are scanned, and the materials are carefully placed back into the original box(es). After all the returned materials have been scanned in, Pearson compares these items to those that were shipped. A list is then generated for each district of all the secure items that were not scanned in for that administration.

Pearson then performs a cross-reference check between this outstanding materials list and any shipping issues reported to Pearson by the districts. Additionally, Pearson will reference any letters or e-mails sent regarding the lending of booklets, damaged materials, or lost/stolen secure materials and attempt to locate those items.



#### **Notification Sent – Scanning Complete and Shipping Issues Resolved**

Following security scanning and the resolution of shipping issues, Pearson will notify the district testing coordinator for districts with more than 100 books or 15% of their original shipment still outstanding. The district is required to respond to Pearson by a designated date so collaborative efforts can begin to locate the outstanding materials. Testing coordinators will be asked to check their records in case the materials referenced were inadvertently left out of the district's shipment. If coordinators believe the materials were returned, they will be asked to contact Pearson with any information that might help narrow the

search – e.g., box numbers in which the materials were packed. This notification generally takes place 6 to 8 weeks after the deadline for submitting nonscorable materials. If possible, Pearson will attempt to call or e-mail the district testing coordinator before sending correspondence via regular mail.

### Step 3

When efforts to reconcile materials not located during scanning are unsuccessful, Pearson undertakes a focused, physical search of all of the boxes returned by a district. After a district's shipment is examined, it can be reasonably assumed that any items that remain unaccounted for are not likely to have been included with the materials that were returned for that administration. Because some administrations overlap – i.e., one administration's materials are received when another administration's materials are still present in the district – the potential still exists for items to be returned in the wrong shipment.



#### Notification Sent – Physical Search Complete

If all materials are not accounted for during the physical search, Pearson will provide a list of the missing items to the district testing coordinator. When possible, this correspondence will be sent after all potentially overlapping administrations are physically examined as well. This typically occurs in mid to late September, and coordinators will again be asked to check their tracking records and return any materials found or to contact Pearson for further assistance.



It is **critical** to the joint resolution effort that district coordinators respond to the prior notifications. Failure to take action can result in delays that may increase the risk of secure test content being compromised.

### Step 4

If a district coordinator does not respond to any of the previously referenced notifications – i.e., does not return the materials listed as outstanding **OR** contact Pearson to provide additional information – the next step is to notify the district superintendent that some or all of the district's secure testing materials cannot be accounted for by Pearson and there has been no communication or cooperation received from the district testing coordinator.



#### Notification Sent – Non-Response Notification to the Superintendent

This letter, which is sent by certified mail, explains that a response from the district test coordinator has not been received for the indicated administration, and it requires the district to ensure that the missing test materials are located and returned to Pearson **OR** to submit documentation to TEA indicating that the materials cannot be located.

## Step 5

Districts are required to submit an incident report and the proper supporting documentation for the late return or loss of secure materials. The last stage of the process involves sending a notification to districts that have not submitted the required documentation necessary to close out the secure materials resolution effort.



### **Notification Sent – Request for Documentation**

If the required documentation is not received, this correspondence is sent to the district superintendent and the district testing coordinator.

Districts indicating that all identified outstanding materials have been returned to the testing contractor are also required to submit an incident report and documentation describing the actions taken by the district to search for the outstanding item(s) and the district's procedures for ensuring that all secure materials were returned to the testing contractor.